Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

LIBRARY RECEIVED MAR 11 1929 U. S. Department of Agriculture

9 Ag3Ar

AGRICULTURAL SITUATION REVIEW ~~Monday, March~~ 4, 1929.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SPEAKING TIME: 11 Minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Comes now the dawn -- of a new month -- and that means a good time to look over the past month in farming and to take stock of what the future may hold in store. This task is done for us on a nation-wide basis by the United States Department of Agriculture, from which our listeners receive each month this special radio summary of the Agricultural Situation. The summary is taken from the monthly report of the Department on the Agricultural Situation.

---ooOoo---

Leafing through the Little Blue Book, which carries facts on the agricultural situation as March opens, we very properly start with the weather of the past month and the effect that it has had on farming operations. This has been one of those real old-fashioned winters such as the homesteaders like to reminisce about. And the Little Blue Book has the following very calm and considered comments to make about it:

"Whatever the growing season may develop hereafter, it is not making a very early start. In fact, winter still lingers throughout much of the North and West and it has been a real winter. During the past month, snow and cold waves have harassed the whole North, including especially the livestock industries of the western range country, and have damaged winter crops in the South and on the Pacific Coast. Preparations for spring work are decidedly backward even in the South (excepting Florida) where heavy rains and cold weather have hindered either field work or crop growth. All told, it looks like a backward start for the great press of spring work.

"On the other hand, in Florida as in the extreme Southwest, the season for early truck crops has opened up with heavier shipments than last spring. An increasing volume of strawberries, citrus fruits, celery, carrots, spinach, and potatoes moved to market last month. In fact, the country-wide carlot movement of 22 important vegetables and fruits was about 7,000 cars or more, or one-fourth greater, this February, than last."

Perhaps a good many of the members of this audience who had to battle with frozen water supplies, blockaded roads, and other inconveniences -- to numerous to mention in refined language -- will have further comments to make on this winter weather and what it has done to farming and farmers, but we'll leave them for you to speak and proceed through the pages of the Little Blue Book.

Here we come to an article on the dairy situation. "Winter production has been fairly heavy," we read, "and latest reports indicate that it is holding up well. The latest estimate indicates increase in butter production during January of almost 2 per cent over January, 1928. Despite increases in each month since August, storage stocks have moved well. Absence of imports has been an important factor. The cheese market is apparently recovering somewhat from the jolt of last month when prices dropped to the lowest January level for some years. Canned milk markets are steady to firm and fluid milk markets show no material change from the fairly favorable position of last month."

But though the dairy markets haven't been very exciting recently things have been happening in the egg and poultry markets, the Little Blue Book informs us. You all know that usually prices of eggs slump during February. But this unusual year is an exception. Late in February egg prices were 6 to 7 cents higher than at the start of the month. That means that they were 18 cents higher than at the same time in 1928. The reason is as plain as a pike-staff. Eggs haven't been coming into the markets as fast as usual. Only two-thirds as many eggs came into dealers' hands last month as in February a year ago. Once again we blame the weather. "Severe cold weather," the Little Blue Book points out, "and widespread heavy snow storms have generally prevailed in many of the producing sections. Decreased production and traffic tie ups, which result from this sort of weather, are certain to have a marked effect on market receipts."

The high February prices have automatically kept eggs from going into cold storage as they usually do at this season of the year.

Prices for poultry are also encouraging to producers. They are considerably higher on all classes than they were a year ago. But the prosperous American must have his chicken dinners now and again so the higher prices seem not to have slowed up consumption. This is evident when we look over the figures of receipts of dressed poultry at the four leading markets. They have been about equal to or slightly heavier than those of February, 1928. The marketing specialists foresee a continuance of the present firm poultry market situation.

The Little Blue Book has some more information this month for poultrymen. It is in the form of an article giving the results of an extensive study of the trend in poultry production by the Division of Crop and Livestock Estimates in the Federal Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The number of chickens on hand in the United States on January 1 is estimated at about 444,000,000. This is almost 4 per person. Most countries have less than one chicken per person. However, that 444,000,000 chickens was 4 per cent fewer than we had on January 1, 1928. Coupled with this decrease in the number of chickens, the decline in number of eggs laid per hen caused by this very cold weather that we've been talking about indicate that Uncle Sam's flocks will produce fewer eggs in 1929 than last year. This may be upset, of course, if prices raise enough to make owners of hens feed their chickens heavier and thus bring about greater egg production. This survey likewise notes the favorable situation for the production and sale of poultry for meat. And the man who made it points out that we may have reached a paradoxical situation -- that we may have excess egg production and too few chickens. Figure that out for yourself. Here is a cue to it from his report: "The increasing proportion of the laying birds in the commercial egg areas coupled with the increased performance of farm hens may have

brought about a paradoxical condition of relative excess of eggs and deficiency of chickens."

Now we turn a leaf to the section dealing with fed lamb situation. This is pretty neatly summed up in the following paragraph:

"In the winter livestock markets, lamb feeders have been doing about as well as anybody. Lamb prices the latter part of February were well above a year ago. The presumption is that with Corn Belt lambs pretty well cleaned out, with only a few more lambs than last year in Western feeding areas, and with the present strong consumer demand for lamb, the situation will continue favorable to feeders throughout this feeding season."

But beef producers haven't been so fortunate recently. Prices of beef steers in recent weeks have held about $1.50 per hundredweight below a year ago. For the first time in 5 years, the production of dressed beef in January exceeded December. Furthermore, the January production this year was about 9 per cent more than a year ago. The temporarily large supply of steers is the result of the numbers put on feed early last summer. However, the explanation for the lower prices of beef steers may also be partly on the consumer end.

The hog-market has been advancing since mid-December. This is natural at this time of year, but the strength of the market this winter, in spite of fairly heavy runs of hogs, is encouraging to producers. Hog prices lately have been running from $1 to $2 per hundredweight higher than a year ago.

Perhaps a good many of you are wondering how the wheat situation looks to the men who make up the Little Blue Book each month, from information coming in to the Department of Agriculture from all over the world. Well, here is how they view it:

"The past month marked further improvement in wheat prices, especially of the hard wheats. This seems to have been due to the gradual realization that the year's crop is being used up rather rapidly. Shipments of wheat, from the principal exporting countries, since July 1, have been around 90,000,000 bushels more than during the same period last season. Europe was short of grain and wheat has been a good buy, hence the importing countries have taken considerably more than a year ago. The market now is bound to be sensitive to reports of weather damage to the growing crop, since the winter has been severe in Europe as well as here."

While we were examining trends a while ago we should have turned to the section of the Blue Book which contains an article on the trends in truck crops and markets, but it will fit in here all right. Uncle Sam's nephews and nieces are developing great appetites for vegetables. Even though the youngsters may still rebel at taking their medicine in the form of spinach and carrots, the older folks seem to grow more fond of vegetables each year. The Little Blue Book article says that in the past ten years the shipments of 17 leading truck crops have more than doubled. And this does not count field crops such as potatoes and sweet potatoes; nor does it figure in the green stuff taken by canning factories. In other words, while the population has increased about 15 per cent, carlot shipments of vegetables increased 140 per cent. The gains were especially big for lettuce, green peas, spinach, string beans, celery and cucumbers.

To satisfy this growing appetite truck growers have been expanding their acreage pretty fast. There is danger of over-doing it and bringing on a spell of rruinously low prices, warn the men on the government watch towers looking for signs of economic danger fo farmers.

Now just one more glimpse into the Little Blue Book, summing up the present agricultural situation and we're through for this month.

This final note has to do with the supplies and prices of various sorts of seeds this spring. Supplies are shorter than last year, and consequently prices of most kinds of seeds are higher than last spring. It seems that you will have to pay more for seed of domestic red clover, alsike clover, alfalfa, timothy, red top, bluegrass, and soybeans, cowpeas, millet, sudan grass, and forage sorghum. Sweet clover is a trifle lower than last year and so is orchard grass.

There isn't any prospect of decreases in prices. The Department men urge you not to delay purchases of seed until the last minute. "The real cream of the seed crop is generally comparatively small and sold out long before the planting season is over," they remind you. "Furthermore it is good practice to send a sample of the seed you purchase to your State experiment station or agricultural college for purity and germination tests. Waiting until the last minute to buy makes this impossible."

---ooOoo---

ANNOUNCEMENT: And thus ends this month's reading of the Little Blue Book issued by the Federal Department of Agriculture under the title THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION. On the first Monday of each month we present a special radio review prepared for us by the Radio Service of the Department of Agriculture. Next month's will be presented at this hour on Monday, April 1.

#####